

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00
SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 MCT-01 AID-05
/056 W

-----070034Z 059910 /72

O R 062240Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4243
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SAN SALVADOR 2136

E.O. 11652: XGDS 1 AND 2
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, PINS, ES
SUBJECT: THE BORGONOVO CASE, A STALEMATE

REF: SAN SALVADOR 1921 AND PREVIOUS; DAO IR 6829 0939 77
1. SUMMARY. THE FOREIGN MINISTER, MAURICIO BORGONOVO, IS
STILL IN THE HANDS OF THE POPULAR LIBERATION FORCES (FPL)
EIGHTEEN DAYS AFTE HIS APRIL 19 CAPTURE. THE BEST WORD
TO DESCRIBE THE PRESENT STATE OF THE MATTER WOULD BE
IMPASSE, WITH THE GOVERNMENT REFUSING TO BUDGE FROM ITS
ADAMANT STAND THAT IT CANNOT AND WILL NOT NEGOTIATE WITH
CRIMINAL TERRORISTS (THE PRESIDENT'S APRIL 29 SPEECH TO
THE NATION), AND THE FPL MAINTAINING ITS ORIGINAL DEMAND
FOR THE RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS. ALL EFFORTS BY
THE BORGONOVO FAMILY AND THIRD PARTIES, INCLUDING NEIGHBORING
GOVERNMENTS AND THE CHURCH, TO GET THE FPL
TO NEGOTIATE THROUGH OTHER CHANNELS, PRESUMABLY FOR OTHER
DEMANDS HAVE COME TO NAUGHT. END SUMMARY.
2. THE PRESIDENT'S TOUGH REFUSAL TO DEAL WITH THE
KIDNAPPERS OTHER THAN TO THREATEN THEM WITH UNRELENTING
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PERSECUTION SHOULD THEY MURDER THE FOREIGN MINISTER,
WAS BROADCAST ON FRIDAY, APRIL 29. MOST OBSERVERS ASSUMED
THE FPL WOULD BE FORCED BY THAT GOES DECISION TO EXECUTE
BORGONOVO, AND THAT THE PRESIDENT'S WORDS ALSO SIGNALLED A SECURITY
SERVICE CRACK DOWN ON THE GOVERNMENT'S QTE LEFTIST ENEMIES
UNQTE.
3. THE FIRST THEORY HAS NOT BEEN BORNE OUT, AND IS

INCREASINGLY SUSPECT WITH THE PASAGE OF TIME. THE FPL IS APPARENTLY NOT GOING TO ACT WITHOUT CAREFUL CONSIDERATION OF ALL ITS OPTIONS. WITH BORGONOVO IN ITS HANDS, THE GOVERNMENT UNABLE TO FIND HIM OR HIS CAPTORS, AND PRESSURES MOUNTING ON THE REGIME TO CHANGE ITS POSITION ON NEGOTIATION, TIME IS NOT RUNNING AGAINST THE KIDNAPPERS. THE SECOND THEORY DERIVED FROM MOLINA'S SPEECH, THAT HE HAD UNLEASHED HIS SECURITY FORCES, HAS REPEAT HAS BEEN BOLSTERED BY SUBSEQUENT GOVERNMENT ACTIONS.

4. ALL SATURDAY, THE DAY FOLLOWING THE SPEECH, NATIONAL GUARD AND POLICE UNITS CONDUCTED LIGHTNING BLOCK SEARCHES THROUGHOUT THE OLD SECTION OF THE CAPITAL. MANY PEOPLE WERE TAKEN INTO CUSTODY FOR NOT HAVING THEIR DOCUMENTS, TREATED ROUGHLY AND RELEASED. THIS INCLUDED A REPORTER-PHOTOGRAPHER TEAM FROM AP'S MEXICO CITY BUREAU (NEITHER AMCTS).THE SECURITY SQUADS ALSO SPOT-SEARCHED MANY BUILDINGS. THE FOLLOWING DAY WAY MAY FIRST, NORMALLY CELEBRATED AS LABOR DAY. ALTHOUGH THE MININTERIOR HAD ANNOUNCED THAT NO PROCESSIONS OR OTHER MANIFESTATIONS WOULD BE PERMITTED UNDER THE GOVERNMENT'S STATE-OF-SIEGE POWERS, A THOUSAND OR SO WORKERS AND CAMPESINOS BEGAN GATHERING THE CUSCATLAN PARK OF THE CAPITAL EARLY SUNDAY MORNING. IT WAS IN THE CONTEXT OF THIS GATHERING AND SECURITY SERVICE EFFORTS TO PROHIBIT A MARCH, THAT SOMETHING SET OFF SHOOTING BETWEEN THE POLICE AND A GROUP OF LIGHTLY ARMED DEMONSTRATORS. THE GOES LATER CLAIMED THE POLICE UNIT WAS ATTACKED BY QTE TERRORISTS UNQTE. THE RESULT WAS EIGHT DEAD (AMONG THE CIVILIANS AND TEN POLICE WOUNDED (GOVERNMENT CONFIDENTIAL

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FIGURES). SEVERAL DOZEN CIVILIANS WERE DETAINED.

5. ANALYZING POLITICAL EVENTS IN THE COUNTRY SINCE THE FOREIGN MINISTER WAS KIDNAPPED, THE FOLLOWING WOULD BE A BOXSCORE OF HOW THE GAME'S GOING FOR THE VARIOUS PARTICIPANTS. THE GOVERNMENT HAS LOST THE MOST GROUND, HAS BEEN ON THE DEFENSIVE FROM THE BEGINNING, AND DID NOT NOTICEABLY IMPROVE ITS POSITION WITH THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH, EXCEPT WITHIN THOSE SECTORS WHERE THE THINKING IS THAT ALL LEFTISTS MUST BE WIPED OUT. THE FPL TERRORISTS HAVE GAINED SOME. THEY HAVE CONVINCINGLY PROVEN THEIR ABILITY TO PUT THE GOVERNMENT IN AN EMBARRASSINGLY TIGHT SPOT. THEY HAVE GAINED RESPECT, IF NOT ADMIRATION, FOR THEIR COOLHEADEDNESS AND SKILLS IN COMMUNICATION. BUT THEY HAVE NOT ACHIEVED THE RELEASE OF THE PRISONERS, WHICH APPARENTLY IS A PRIORITY GOAL, AND MAY IN FACT HAVE PUT THE LIVES OF THOSE NAMED (AND OTHERS) IN JEOPARDY. THE BORGONOVO FAMILY HAS SUFFERED HEAVY LOSSES. THE OBVIOUS ARE THE POSSIBLE LOSS OF THE FAMILY MEMBER HIMSELF,

THE ANGUISH AND TENSION AS THEY WAIT, AND THE MONIES
EXPENDED TRYING TO SAVE HIM. THE FAMILY MUST
ALSO SUFFER FROM THE KNOWLEDGE THAT THE GOVERNMENT
HE SERVED IS WILLING TO RISK SACRIFICING HIM, AND THAT
WHATEVER THE OUTCOME, HIS PUBLIC CAREER
APPEARS ENDED. THE ONLY CLEAR WINNER HAS BEEN THE LOCAL
NEWSPAPER OWNERS, WHOSE PAPERS CONTINUE TO BE GORGED WITH PAID
APPEALS FROM ALL SIDES FOR THE FPL TO RELEASE BORGONOVO
UNHARMED. THE FAMILY'S CAMPAIGN TO ELICIT SUPPORT AND PLEAS
FROM CA POLITICAL LEADERS, THE CHURCH AND REPRESENTATIVES OF
ALL SECTORS OF SALVADORAN SOCIETY CONTINUES UNABATED.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SAN SALVADOR 2136

6.COMMENT. ALTHOUGH INDICATIONS ARE ALL THAT THE IMPASSE
WILL CONTINUE, SOME SEE THAT, IN ITSELF, AS A HOPEFUL
SIGN THAT BORGONOVO WILL COME OUT ALIVE. RICARDO
CASTANEDA, THE ACTING MINISTER, TOTALLY INVOLVED IN
LOOKING FOR A WAY OUT OF THE BOX, IS GAINING CONFIDENCE
THAT TIME IS ON THE SIDE OF A FAVORABLE ENDING.
THE FPL'S APPARENT RELUCTANCE TO KILL THE MINISTER
DESPITE CONSIDERABLE GOVERNMENT PROVOCATION IS CITED.
WHILE SHARING SOME OF THIS CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM, THE
EMBASSY WOULD GIVE BORGONOVO NO BETTER THAN A
FIFTY-FIFTY CHANCE. SOME EMBASSY CONTACTS HAVE
SUGGESTED THE GOVERNMENT ITSELF WOULD PREFER
THAT THE TERRORISTS ASSASSINATE THE MINISTER, WHICH WOULD
BE THE PERFECT EXCUSE TO START A TOTAL ERADICATION OF LEFTIST

ENEMIES.

7 THE EMBASSY HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN THE PERIPHERY OF THE CASE.
ON APRIL 21, CASTANEDA SPOKE TO A POLOFF
AND ADMITTED HIS DESPAIR THAT NOT EVERYTHING
WAS BEING DONE TO SAVE THE MINISTER. HE DESCRIBED HIS
PERSONAL CONVICTION THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD NOT RPT NOT
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MADE UP HIS MIND WHICH WAY TO GO. CASTANEDA SAID HE
FELT THAT IF PRESIDENT-ELECT ROMERO COULD BE BROUGHT
AROUND TO SEE THE POTENTIAL FOR NATIONAL DISASTER THAT
LAY IN THE DIRECTION OF A GOVERNMENT DECISION TO
SACRIFICE BORGONOVO, THE PRESIDENT ALSO MIGHT BE CONVINCED.
CASTANEDA ASKED TO SPEAK WITH THE DATT, TO
SEE IF THE LATTER MIGHT PRESENT THE ARGUMENTS TO
ROMERO. A MEETING WAS ARRANGED WITH THE DATT THE FOLLOWING
DAY AT CASTANEDA'S HOME. THE AMBASSADOR AND POLOFF WERE PRESENT.
AFTER LISTENING TO CASTANEDA'S ARGUMENTS
AND REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE, THE AMBASSADOR AUTHORIZED
THE DATT TO MAKE THE APPROACH. THE DATT SAW ROMERO ON APRIL 25,
AND FOUND HIM RECEPTIVE TO THE ARGUMENTS. ROMERO PROMISED TO FOLLOW-
THROUGH WITH MOLINA AND THE ARMED FORCE. THE PRESIDENT'S APRIL
28 SPEECH INFORMED US THAT THE DECISION HAD GONE
THE OTHER WAY. AT A MEETING WHICH CASTANEDA CALLED IN
HIS OFFICE ON MAY 2 WITH THE AMBASSADOR, DATT AND POLOFF,
HE DISPLAYED CONSIDERABLE SHOCK AND AGONY THAT

THE AVENUE HAD BEEN SO COMPLETELY CUT OFF.
CASTANEDA APPEARED ALMOST TOTALLY DEPRESSED AND DISCOURAGED.
AS MENTIONED ABOVE, HE HAS BOUNCED BACK FROM
THAT POSTURE WITH THE INTERVENING PASSAGE OF TIME.
HE HAS ALSO REPEATEDLY EXPRESSED HIS GRATITUDE FOR THE EMBASSY'S
ATTEMPTS TO HELP, WITH ROMERO AS WELL AS ACTING
AS A SOUNDING BOARD FOR HIS THOUGHTS AND OPTIONS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: KIDNAPPING, POLITICAL SITUATION, TERRORISTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 06-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977SANS02136
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1 AND 2
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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From: SAN SALVADOR
Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 SAN SALVADOR 1921
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27-Jan-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2614825
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE BORGONOVO CASE, A STALEMATE
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, PINS, ES, FPL, (BORGONOVO POHL, MAURICIO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/e0b50799-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009